

## **1.1 City of Waterville, Maine: Assessing Department**

Interview Type	Personal, Municipality
Interview Location	Waterville City Hall, Assessing Office
Interview Date	November 8, 2001
Summary Date	December 02, 2001
Interviewer	AGI / Richard Sutton ( <a href="mailto:rs@appgeo.com">rs@appgeo.com</a> )
Interviewed:	Paul Castonguay, Assessor
Staff Size (approx)	2
Budget (approx)	
URL:	<a href="http://www.ci.waterville.me.us/assessor.htm">http://www.ci.waterville.me.us/assessor.htm</a> <a href="http://www.kvcog.org/cities/oakland.phtml">http://www.kvcog.org/cities/oakland.phtml</a> (KVCOG summary)

### **1.1.1 Agency Overview**

The City of Waterville is the employment and commercial center of northern Kennebec County. Its two I-95 interchanges link it with Augusta, 15 miles to the south, and Bangor, 60 miles to the east. The city is also served by Robert LeFleur Airport (general aviation and free trade zone) and the central Maine rail yard of the Springfield Terminal Line. Relatively small in size, at 14 square miles, Waterville is highly urbanized, hosts multiple colleges, and has a well-developed city center along U.S. Route 201. The Kennebec River bounds Waterville to the east.

Waterville's population of approximately 17,000 residents has been declining slowly for the past 40 years. There are over 7,000 housing units with a total taxable valuation of nearly \$550 million.

The Assessing Department appears typical of a well run office for a city of this size. But in addition to its careful organization and numerous hardcopy map products for sale, it is notable in that it makes most of its tabular and parcel map data available from a kiosk in the office as well as through a Web browser. It does this very efficiently and inexpensively.

### **1.1.2 GIS Initiatives**

#### **1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization**

Waterville Assessing utilizes ESRI ArcView to display and query parcel data for the city, and to analyze valuation patterns and trends. The department consists of Paul Castonguay, Assessor, and Gary Robbins, Deputy Assessor. The GIS system has been built almost entirely by the Assessor himself, and is used almost exclusively by him as well.

#### **1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure**

- (1) license of ArcView 3.2
- 24" sheet feed plotter (HP 450C DesignJet)
- Public works also has a plotter, and will be acquiring a new one that Assessing will split the cost of and house in its offices
- Secretary for Codes and Planning uses ArcExplorer

### **1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements**

#### **1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data**

Waterville Assessing maintains parcels, building footprints and street centerlines and has aerial photography flown in 1992. The city's 5400 (4800 taxable) parcel polygons were automated for \$2800 by Aerial Surveys of Norridgewock using the 1992 orthophoto base. Approximately \$800 is spent annually with the same firm to perform annual parcel updates. The data are stored in MeGIS UTM Zone 19 NAD83 meters standard. The format is ESRI Shapefile.

The parcels are linked to dbase extracts from the city's Vision CAMA system. Extracts are made annually.

There is a zoning shapefile, but it is not used very frequently. Basic hydrology and some other MeGIS layers are employed for basemap enhancement.

### **1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements**

#### Desktop

The only desktop applications are ArcView symbolized views and custom queries that the Assessor uses to analyze and interpret the parcel layer on an ongoing basis.

ArcView was purchased with comprehensive planning money, and all subsequent desktop data organization has been accomplished solely at the hands of Paul Castonguay.

What other GIS activity there is in the city (planning and public works) has been seeded by Paul Castonguay and uses ESRI's free ArcExplorer product.

#### Web

Waterville parcels are served over the web without restriction or user cost at <http://www.ci.waterville.me.us/taxmaps.htm>. This application was developed by Blue Marble Geographics using their BeyondGEOWeb server application as an initial test site for the application. It is a simple, bare bones parcel delivery application, but delivers the necessary information effectively. The CAMA extract it serves includes ownership name but not land or building values.

#### **Planned future GIS activity and applications:**

Waterville Assessing is planning to integrate sanitary sewers and stormwater drains and ward boundaries within the next two years. Bus routes will also be automated by an outside consultant.

### **1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues**

- Waterville's GIS is an example of access to spatial data on a shoestring. Consisting of citywide parcels that are always accurate to within 12 months and a small suite of basemap and analysis features, the data visualization needs of the Assessing Department are well served. The entire budget for the life of this project has been

less than \$5000. The Assessor has taken no formal training, but out of interest in the technology and vocational utility he has built his GIS. He estimates that he spends on average 15% of his time using and improving the system.

- Assessing has recently required digital submission of sub-division plans and plot plans.
- The Assessor makes the parcels and related CAMA data available to those who ask for it at no cost. Colby College recently requested and received the data. His philosophy is “If they’re smart enough to ask for shapefiles, I’ll send them an email attachment.”

#### 1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

The Assessor estimates that the Blue Marble Web application spares him more than 3 thousand visits and phonecalls per year to his office, and has allowed him to eliminate a \$30,000 staff position.